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Send me an Angel

After kicking butt in *Charlie's Angels*, LUCY LIU brings a comic edge to the dark and unusual thriller *THE WRONG MAN*.

BY DANNY PEARY



When you agree to take a part such as *The Wrong Man*, do you think it's going to take your career to the next level?

"I never believe, 'This is going to be the breaking moment in my life!' Because sometimes you do something you're so proud of and it never even gets released. So to me it's just about being able to play different characters, and doing something you wouldn't expect yourself to do. Or it's about working with somebody that you find interesting."

Did you always want to act?

"I thought about it for a long, long time but it wasn't really feasible. In my family, it was more about education; that was the only way to get anywhere in this life. My parents came to America for school and my entire family is very much into education. I took acting when I was in college. I went to NYU, but I'd lived in New York all my life and thought I needed a change, so I switched to the University of Michigan and graduated from there. I appeared in a couple of plays at Michigan and wanted to continue."

How do your parents feel about your career now?

"I think my parents are happier now than at the beginning. Originally I was like, 'Why don't you support whatever I want to do?' They're now accepting of it. It's a little easier for them now because they don't have to worry about what's going to happen to me when they're not around. Parents never stop being parents; you want them to be your friends at a certain age and it's not going to happen."

When did your parents relax?

"I don't know. It might have been by the sequel for *Charlie's Angels*. Who knows if they feel totally relaxed about it now? They're like, 'Are you working?' I'm like, 'No'. In this business, you'll work on three movies in a year and then you won't work. To me it's not like you're being lazy, and I don't go around spending my money like water. But for them, you have to be working every single day; otherwise you don't really have a job."

I'm sure they're proud of your work as an ambassador for UNICEF...

"That's what they're most proud of. My mother is very much into charities. She works full time, but she volunteers all of her spare time, which tells you a lot about her character. It's something I always wanted to do. I always wanted to work with children, and UNICEF is

the best place to do that. So that has been most beneficial to my life. Even if I wasn't working in the movie industry, I'd be involved in that at some point."

Have you been scared going into dangerous areas of the world?

"No. You go to Pakistan, you fly through Baghdad, you go to Africa. I don't really think about what could be, because if you think about that too much, you'll end up not doing anything at all. This way, if I step off a curb and get hit by a car, I have no regrets. I won't look back and go, 'I shouldn't have done that'. I've never thought that way."

You are going to be the title character in the new *Charlie Chan* movie, playing Chan's granddaughter. The old films with Warner Oland and Sidney Toler got a lot of criticism, but they had charm...

"I think so, too. If you see past the fact that the actor playing Charlie Chan was not Asian, you get the general feeling for it. I think people didn't know enough

"Nobody's thrown any chopsticks at me recently."



then. It's not about being politically correct; it's about understanding that now you can actually have Asian actors playing Asian characters. Things were very different then. You can't go back in the past and change it. But you can change things *now*."

When choosing roles, do you have to be sensitive to the Asian American community?

"I choose roles for myself. If you start trying to choose roles for other people and fulfill what they would like, I think you'd get lost. You can do that for a certain amount of time, but ten years down the line you'll look at yourself and you won't even know who you are. You've made choices for everyone else, including your family, your friends, and the general public. And if you've made choices, you should take responsibility for those choices. If the Asian American community writes me a letter and says you really should do a role and I do it, it doesn't matter if it succeeds or flops because I don't feel connected to it. It's going to show in my work. I don't want to point fingers if someone else made choices for me. I ask people that I care about what they think, but they know I don't always go along with what they think. It's good to get the different ideas, and I have maybe four people that I talk to. None are Asian; two are Irish-Americans. You generally know the answers, but you want to hear what other people think."

Do you ever feel pressured by the Asian American community to pick the right parts?

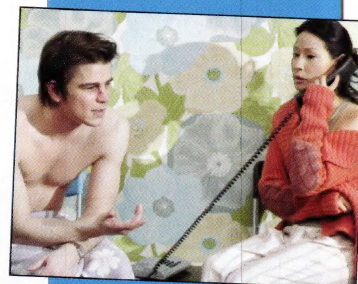
"I feel pressure only from myself. Nobody's thrown any chopsticks at me recently."

Have you had a hard time dealing with being the subject of gossip magazines, particularly since *Charlie's Angels*?

"There's always something to criticise, and the tendency is for people to build you up to tear you down. I think there's just a ton of animosity and I don't wish to channel that negative energy. I don't read any magazines because it gets confusing. Who doesn't want to look fabulous? But I'm not going to be posing on my couch and I'm not going to put my house on display anytime soon. There's a certain amount of privacy that I want to hold on to."

The *Wrong Man* is released on November 9 and is reviewed on Page 58.

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Lucy Liu dishes about working with heartthrob Josh Hartnett on *The Wrong Man*.

"We'd read the script together, and then [director] Paul McGuigan showed us what the set was probably going to look like. The next time I saw Josh we were shooting. It's hard to determine if you have any chemistry sometimes because you don't really get to know someone until you work with them. When you meet somebody briefly, there's so much stuff going on. Everyone's busy talking or doing costume fittings, and you don't really get a true vibe. But when you begin working with someone on any set, you get to know them really quickly. Whether you'll be working with them for two weeks or three months, it's a very quick connection. It was great with Josh. I knew we had great chemistry; we liked each other a great deal, and we were both really relaxed. Our sex scene may seem so intimate onscreen, but we were surrounded by so many people that it didn't feel that way at the time. It was like hanging out. We were having fun, playing a name game in bed. How do people get to know each other? By talking, joking around, and testing each other. That makes it intimate."